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ABSTRACT

Ways in which games can be used as tools in observing, diagnosing, and providing educational therapy for learning dysfunctions are listed and described in a series of four related papers: (a) "Educational Therapy for Learning Dysfunctions"; (2) "Educational Therapy and Puzzles"; (3) "Educational Therapy and Reading Fluency"; and (4) "Spelling Errors--Where?" The value of the game approach is noted and examples of the approach using crossword puzzles, which can be used for diagnosis as well as training, are offered. Other types of puzzles are advocated as ways to deal with distraction, unorganized thinking, and lack of motivation. Steps in puzzle solving are noted. A case study is presented of a 7-year old, diagnosed as hyperactive, who learned to sustain attention with a puzzle task. It is noted that many children seem hyperactive because of bad working habits, failure, and low self-confidence. The role of educational therapy in improving reading fluency and spelling accuracy is further examined. (CL)

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Educational Therapy for Learning Dysfunctions.

This presentation deals with the structured use of games as a tool in the observation, diagnosis and educational therapy of learning dysfunctions.

The same games are employed both in the observation and diagnostic phase and in the process of educational therapy; those goals can be achieved by the classroom teacher. The proposed method involves the exclusive usage; it avoids the formal testing process which might put the child in an unnatural and emotional strainful situation. The fear of failure is evaded and the famous viscious circle of "non-succes" that leads to low self-esteem (and vice versa) is not created.

The detection of individual differences and the identification of personal special needs in the educational process, while applying this method are faster, better and easier.

Various typical problems encountered in Learning disabled children have been dealt with by this method:

1. Distraction and lack of concentration.
2. Short attention span.
3. Concept formation impairment.
4. Lack oof organised thinking.
5. Visual and auditory perceptional difficulties.

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6. Motivational deficiencies.

7. Poor judgement (in diverse areas).

8. Low selfesteem.

These (and many other) problems are usually reflected in scolastic low achievement.On the other hand however, it is fashionable to state that "scolastic achievement is not all that important; what really matters are the emotional stability,self esteem and the child's feelings of happiness".

It is questionable if we can evaluate those traits in a direct way.

Did anyone ever overhear a teacher (or parent) ask a schoolchild wether he was moral, honest or if he had robbed stolen, or lied that day?! Did they ask wether he had been happy that day! The questions we usually encounter concern grades, tests, homework, bookreports etc..We employ those "scolastic queries" to detect and appraise happiness/sadness, level of selfesteem and social or emotional stability; achievement, thus, goes together with non-scolastic traits.

When we encounter a child that has failed in his "academic" behaviour due to covert handicaps or limitations, we are faced with a serious problem: any question that relates to his scolistic achievement may immediately arouse a child's frustrations and emotional antagonism.

Here is where educational observation and therapy, through games, steps in.

The "game situation" has not been associated with negative experiences.

Therefore it enables the teacher to get to the bottom of the underlying problems without having to deal with the overt obstacles.

Games can be used to ellicit specific functions: concentration, vocabulary, strategy (thinking) and other "basic traits".Crosschecking

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of our notions can be achieved by using different games that to the untrained eye seem to be unrelated.

Using the same tools we can train the child to improve his capabilities, without encountering the emotional resistance he may have developed in his relation to the more formal and scolastic daily situations in which he has hitherto failed.

This gradual strengthening of performance will effect the emotional and motivational attitudes that have hindered him in the classroom situation, until

he will realise that now he can cope with this situation too.

To conclude - games are an important tool in educational therapy. Independent

of technology, games serve us in a very unexpected and beneficial way to attain our educational goals.

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Educational Therapy and Crossword Puzzles.

When the term "educational therapy" is used in this article a process is meant, which includes the informal testing preceding the actual course of therapy.

Usually, diagnosis goes through the therapy - and therapy already starts in the diagnostic phase. Each therapeutic session includes a new kind of information about the progress or change in the child (whether this change is direct or indirect, desired or undesired). It is possible to demonstrate these ideas through the analysis of the underlying functions necessary to solve a crossword puzzle. The puzzle is therefore used throughout the entire educational therapeutic process, and shows outstanding results when applied to children with the mental age of seven to eighteen. Therefore it is clear that the level of difficulty in crossword puzzles varies very much from one age level to the other. The crossword puzzle is an excellent instrument for diagnosis and therapy.

The intellectual functions necessary to solve such a puzzle are:

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a. Reading;

b. Vocabulary;

c. Memory (visual and auditory);

d. Thinking;

e. Strategy;

g. Concentration.

Following are several examples that explain how those functions are incorporated in the usage of crossword puzzles, as various puzzles differ in the structure and emphasis of the underlying functions.

1. Crossword puzzles that require a definition.
2. Crossword puzzles that require a synonym.
3. Crossword puzzles that require an opposite.
4. Crossword puzzles that require a concept.
5. Crossword puzzles that require a word game (change of letter order in a word).
6. Crossword puzzles that require an explanation (more than one word).
7. Crossword puzzles that require abbreviations.
8. Crossword puzzles that require formal and informal knowledge/information of names,dates, facts and similar items.

Generally crossword puzzles combine several of those elements in their structure.

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Explanation and Procedure.

When a child is presented with a crossword puzzle, it is possible to evaluate his ability in the various aspects which have been formerly listed. For example, one can see whether the child can read and on which level. If he is able to solve a few words it is a sure fact that he has read the definition. The same goes for spelling, if he has written those words correctly. Of course the same applies to other intellectual functions mentioned: Knowledge of facts, dates, names, abbreviations and definitions will show the level of information, thinking and memory - all limited of course to the level required in that particular puzzle.

Accordingly, one can diagnose first, and train later on those areas which were found to be weak. On the other hand, the educational therapist can reinforce through the strong areas the previous found weaknesses.

The advantage of this kind of training and reinforcement is the very high motivation found to be present in most cases after very few words are solved - to continue and complete the crossword puzzle. It is therefore advisable to intervene and help the child in the beginning in order to reduce his fear and insecurity. It is important to keep in mind, that in order to use this very efficient tool for diagnostics and therapy, one has to have a great variety of different crossword puzzles, both in level of difficulty and the way they are structured. On the other hand, on the training level one should use different puzzles on the SAME level of difficulty. To sum up: experience shows that both diagnosis and training /therapy, through crossword puzzles

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improves scholastic achievement in a quite short time.

It is possible to use the crossword puzzle in arithmatics as well if words are changed to numbers. This will be described in a seperate article.

It is interesting to state that the above described method with its advantages can be applied to a large range of population, starting with the educable, mentally retarded children up to the level of highly intelligent children.

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Educational Therapy and Puzzles.

I. GENERAL.

BACKGROUND.

GAMES. Games are here used as an informal device that overcomes and bypasses emotional defense mechanisms.

STRUCTURED USE OF GAMES.

The use of games is structured as a tool in:

a. observation.
b. diagnosis.
c. educational therapy of learning dysfunctions.

AREAS OF APPLICATION.

Games can be applied in the following areas:

a.distraction or lack of concentration.
b.short attention span.
c.concept formation impairment.
d.lack of organized thinking.
e.visual and auditory perceptional difficulties.
f.motivational deficiencies.
g.poor judgement in diverse areas.
h.low selfesteem.

THE POPULATION.

Games can be applied to:

a.children with M.B.D.
b.children with educable-mental-retardation.
c.hyperactive children.

THE PROBLEM.

The problem is "A no-succes Loop" starting from:

a.an objective limitation, leading to
b.failure, resulting in
c.lack of confidence, causing
d.lack of training, carrying along
e.lack of motivation,returning to the starting point
f.objective defecits.

THE SOLUTION.

The solution to avoid the loop is:

Playing the games in a motivating and

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non-threatening situation.

II.SPECIAL.

PUZZLES.

Puzzles applied as a Game or Tool in the following areas:

1.Distraction, as a result of hyperactivity, hyperkinetics or hypersensority.
2.Lack of Organized Thinking.
3.Lack of Motivation.

THREE INTEGRATED ELEMENTS.

Puzzles contain three integrated elements:

1.Color.
2.Shape.
3.Content.

STEPS IN PUZZLE SOLVING.

Puzzles are solved proceeding in the following steps:

1.Turn the pieces upwards.
2.Sort in three heaps separating:
   a.Corners,
   b.Straight edges,
   c.Curved borders.
3.Place corners in their correct positions, checking over and over the picture of the puzzle.
4.Complete the frame.
5.Fill the inside.

MISTAKES.

Here follows a list of the most common mistakes:

1.While sorting heaps the concepts of "corner"or "straight" versus "curved" might not be clear to the child.
2.While placing corner pieces, corners should point to the outside; a logic step which might not be automatically perceived by the child.
3.While placing corner pieces the contents of the example-picture might not be considered. (f.e. the sky being blue should always be on top.)
4.While constructing and completing the frame as well as the inside of the puzzle, the child might ignore ONE or TWO of the following elements: content,color or shape. If he considers only content and color,but ignores the shape or making mistakes in any other comoination the result will be a piece fitted in the wrong way.

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REASONS FOR MAKING MISTAKES.

Mistakes will be made if the child is:

1. not looking,
2. not concentrating,
3. not being motivated,
4. not thinking, thus using trial and error.

III. CONCLUSIONS.

1. Puzzles can be used as an excellent tool for teaching ORGANIZED WORKING HABITS.
2. Teaching organized working habits will lead to LOGIC AND ANALYTIC THINKING.
3. Creating the opportunity of success in puzzle solving will eliminate the lack of motivation or reinforce weak existing motivation.
4. Assisting the child in reaching success will avoid the common depression resulting from failure.

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Educational Therapy and Puzzles.

A Case Study.

A seven year old boy was diagnosed as hyperactive, inattentive, lack of concentration, confused, aggressive, having very low self esteem. Furthermore he was labeled as"minimal braindamaged", "learning disabled" and was called some other "beautiful" names.I asked him if he could do a 20-piece "Walt Disney" puzzle, and his mother who was present answered "Of course, he does puzzles of 2000 pieces or less.(Not more - less!).She didn't comprehend the absurd in her last statement, or - and the exaggeration in her words.Neither did she understand why I wanted her son to do a puzzle - when his difficulties were lack of concentration in arithmatic.His name was Jossy."O.K.", I said, "Mammi told me that you love puzzles. Let's see. Do you need any help? Here is the picture - please try do it nice and slow,but well." Again the mother (surprised) said: "Why slow? He should work fast. He could! Right Jossy? Puzzles you do always fast." "O.K.", I said again. "Let's go. Remember, take your time.Look well at the picture and try to put the pieces together."Jossy threw the puzzle parts on the table, straight from the box and they scattered all over.He picked those pieces, which had fallen down, up from the floor and again I said: "Now we can start".

The first two pieces were both blue (the sky). He tried three ways.

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"No fit." He took another piece, not even blue and tried again.Then said: "I want that." and pointed at the "Simon" on my desk. 'O.K.", I said."You want the"Simon?" Very well. I shall complete the puzzle and then we will take the "Simon".

I started to do the puzzle MY way, quite fast, in order to get a quick completion of the picture. As I expected after having finished 14 pieces - he did want to help me. Occasionally I asked him:"How about finishing?" He said:"O.K." and took a piece and fitted it perfectly. I said:"How nice.Try to do e rest as well.Shall I help you?"."No," he said,suddenly motivated, and he put the second piece of the 5 left in the wrong position.He turned it to all directions,threw it away,took another piece, and gave up again."Simon",he said again."Soon.Right away", I said, putting quickly another 3 parts in the right spot, leaving only 1 piece near him,close to his right hand.

"Jossy,could you fit this last piece?".He didn't answer, took the piece, but I stopped him with my hand(patting his hand - was I afraid of losing him again?) and said:"Just a moment.Look at that box on the picture.The piece you are holding fits in one way only.Try slowly to think which way to fit it and then when you are positive fit it in."(The box I was referring to on that piece was a treasury box shown on the puzzle picture.)

He looked at the picture (for the first time, until now he had only looked at the pieces!) then he looked at the almost completed puzzle,turned the piece in his hand in the right position and put it right."Wonderful",I said."Now one more moment before the "Simon"". "O.K.", he said. Then I took 2 pieces out of the center of the puzzle and told him to fit them in after having thought very carefully.My instructions were:"Remember,look well, think, turn the piece ,if

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necessary and then let your hand fit it in." I gave him 1 piece, he did alright, but at the second piece he forgot to look at the picture and tried his good luck in fitting.He missed,I reminded him to look at the picture.After having done this he fitted the piece correctly. We looked at each other in satisfaction now that the picture was completed.(Walt Disney picture puzzles are beautiful to look at, once they are completed.)
Jossy got the "Simon".

Do you, the reader, believe it, but Jossy sat for thirty minutes without getting up since he first opened the puzzle.(Hyperactive? Lack of concentration? I rather think: Very bad learning habits, Lack of patience and self-confidence which lead to lack of motivation!)

Second session.
"Remember we did that beautiful puzzle? Today I will show you that you are doing a lot better than the last time.I will show you my way how to solve a puzzle." I took all the pieces out of the box and turned them side-up.Then I started to sort them in two heaps, sides and corners versa center pieces.I purposely said:"Straight, straight, not-straight,straight,not-straight,"while sorting the pieces in two heaps."Can you help me?", I asked, I did not wait for his answer, but kept on sorting quickly to avoid boredom.I emphasized the method of sorting as an organized part of solving a puzzle. I had to make sure, of course, that he knew the concepts of "straight" and "non-straight"."O.K.", I said. "You check if we didn't make a mistake, because we worked so fast". We checked the pieces again.No mistakes. "O.K.", I said."Second stage - 4 corners. Let's select from the

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straight parts those pieces that have two straight sides. They are corners." I showed him the corners of the table and said:"Like those!The table also has four corners." From the straight pieces I selected the first corner and said:"Now you.Continu!"He picked another two corners and I gave him the fourth.(I do a lot of helping to avoid failure and to elicite self-confidence.This way I don't easily "lose" the child.) On the big table I put the 4 corners saying loud and clear:"Let's see.Two are the sky and two are the ground.These are blue and those are green.These are up and those are down.Now let's look at the picture and spot them right."

What did he do!? He started to put the two blue corners together! ("God help me",I thought."Two corners together.How about thinking?!) "O.K.",I said."Almost Let's look at the two pieces of the sky on the picture.Look they are FAR "f -a -r" from each other.Could you put them far,not close?" "Yes!" He did.

"Can you see WHY?" "Yes", he answered. "Why?", I asked."Because they are blue."

"No,"I said."Because they are corners and corners don't touch each other.Remember, corners are far away from each other, like on the picture, like the table corners." Here I showed him corners at a square, at a right angle. I took the 4 corners, shuffeled them in my hand and said:"These two are the sky,those two are the ground, remember they are corners and now put them on their right places." He looked at the picture (I wanted to kiss him,but restrained myself) - he put the blue pieces on top, the green pieces on the bottom, the distance allright, but ....not at the same distance. The upper part was narrower than the lower part.Hence the sky not as wide as the ground.I looked as if I had to think about this and said:"How come?

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The sky narrow and the bottom wide.Is that as it is supposed to be? Or like this?"I changed the position of the left lower corner to fit the right width. "Yes," he said."Like this."(Insight) "You did so well,"I said;"How about playing with the "Simon" now." "No,"he said "I want to solve the puzzle!" I made believe as if I didn't care, but of course, I was very happy.Thirty-five minutes had passed and still he didn't want to stop learning!

"O.K." I said "Let's go on." I took all the blue pieces of the sky in my hand and suggested we should make the sky first. I gave him piece by piece, made him look first -think -and finally fit the piece.(I was now trying to change working habits, make him think and succeed.) He completed the sky.We counted including the corners 6 pieces. "How many pieces",I asked "should we need for the ground? Another 4 or 6?" "I don't know," he said."I haven't done this puzzle before.""O.K." I said, "Let's think." "The bottom is like this." I demonstrated the width. "The sky is like this;that means they have the same width, the same number of pieces. So if we have already two corners at the ground, how many more do we have to add to match the width of he sky?" "Four," he said."Fine." I said and was happy that he finely started to think.(even though with help.) Now we looked for green pieces and finished the bottom together."How about leaving the rest for the next time?" "No!" he said."Now." I said to him:"I am tired.Let's continue tomorrow."He agreed.

Believe me,that I would have loved to work another halfanhour and finish. But one has to stop after such a fresh and new success, before the child becomes tired, because then next time he might associate tiredness with frustration or ending.

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Third session.

"Today we start where we have left off yesterday. Here is the sky and there the ground.Should we finish the frame now?" "Yes," he said."Let's do the whole picture." "Careful, first you have to look and then you have to ...""Think!" he cut in before I had a chance to finish my sentence.He smiled.(This was the first time I saw him smile.)

I started to describe the color and contents of the parts in the left and the right side of the frame.He took a part, looked, thought and put it right.Again he started to "run ahead." I stopped him,saying:"Slowly does it!"

From here on each piece was evaluated by three elements: shape, contents, and color. The straight side was always to be on the outer side. (frame)

The logic solution of the puzzle had to consider the three above-mentioned elements.We finished the frame. The inside of the puzzle was the easiest part.This went fast and almost smooth.The main thing I expected from Jossy was to look at the piece before placing it.

The next day a new puzzle was given with the same number of pieces but a different picture.The same instructions were given as on the previous day (s'ow, look, think and the same system of selecting the pieces was required).Jossy sat fifty minutes and completed the puzzle with a minimum number of mistakes.

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Conclusions and Suggestions.

Many hyperactive children seem hypersensoric and hyperkinetic because of bad working habits, failure, and low self-confidence. The lack of concentration results in boredom and manifests itself as lack of motivation. This may further cause under-achievement in scolastic tasks and academic performance. The child seems lazy, and hates school. A vicious circle has now been created.

The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate how puzzles can be used in educational therapy to organize thinking and enlarge the concentration and attention span, thus minimizing restlessness, failure and to improve self-image by consistent success.

The same method at a slower rate and with simplified instructions can also be applied to the education of mildly mentally retarded children.

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Educational Therapy and Reading Fluency.

The emphasis in this paper will be on the very problem of fluency of reading.It will not discuss the problem of not understanding the meaning of written material, nor will it handle the problem of the child who has not acquired the elements of reading (consonants and vowels and their structure). Since the child is not fluent it seems that he stutters, stammers and most of the time he will refuse to read or do so without interest nor motivation.

Teachers and parents of such a child usually have another problem on hand: the psychological hangup which is sometimes worse than the primary problem itself. This is accompanied by hatred to books and fear of failure towards the very activity of reading itself. Sometimes the hatred of books and fear of failure is associated with dislike of those people who want "the best" for the child and hence "push" to read more. If those people happen to be the parents,their behavior causes tension and an unpleasant relationship.

The therapeutic procedure can only be started after that physical eye and/or focus of the eye examinations have eliminated the possibility of vision problems.

Now it is essential that the very first step to be taken in therapy should be the reduction of fear enabling complete relaxation on the side of the child.

Motivation is very important of course, and hence various means to motivate have to be carefully chosen by the educational therapist. This can be done by using games or video programs prepared specially for this purpose.

It should be stressed that by no means the child should be allowed to read aloud and this in spite of possible objection on the side of the parents. They might feel that the child misses valuable time by not practising.However the damage done by having the child read aloud which annuls the possibility to achieve complete relaxation endangers the whole treatment. It should thus be clear that the "rule":Don't allow the child to read aloud in the first phase of treatment, is very important.

Sometimes the child will express his will to read aloud, but this should also not be encouraged since he might want to please and hence not completely relax.

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The Procedure.

Therapy of fluency of reading might be started at the end of the first grade, preferably during the summer vacation between the first and the second grade. When started afterwards at any mental age after seven, chances are that the older the child is, the more reading efforts have been made and the more the child is or has been frustrated. This is important when considering the time it takes to overcome the psychological problem.

Reading Games.

Playing Cards.

The child should be made familiar with the twelve series of four cards each (forty eight cards altogether). He should take the time to look at the pictures. We will assume that the card game is on the topic of animals. They are divided into groups and "families" and each four belong together, having the same heading. For example on top of four cards it says"wild beasts" on another group of four it says "domestic animals" and so on.

The same of course could go for any card game of this kind, for example:

Flowers (cultured flowers,desert flowers,water flowers).

Cities, (each city consists of four cards with the same name).

The pictures represent the streets or important sites of the city in each group.

When asked to sort in each game four cards which belong together - the child will focus his eyes on the headings first. Then he will move his eyes from card to card to look for matching cards.

The cards should be put in four horizontal lines, thus causing an orderly scanning procedure of the child's eyes along the headings.

His eyes, thus, first focus on a certain written word or on certain words (i.e. "desert flowers"), then they follow to the next card and so on, till they reach or find the matching card. Unintentionally and mainly without threat the child trains his silent reading going over the words again and again. At this level his purpose is to find four cards of a kind. Eventually, the more series he finds, the more chances he has or the less difficulties rather to find the remaining (left over) series, since each four are put aside less and less remain on the table. The motivation is found to be high, since the matching activity seems rather easy and thus he will try harder and will get better and faster.

The more such activities the therapist will provide for (in other words: matching 4-6-8-10-12 card games on all various topics) the more efficient the child will get in the matching procedure. It is important to stress that while the therapist may say aloud the names of the series that the child matches, the therapist should not yet encourage the child to read, guess, or memorize those words aloud. This period is called incubation, wherein the child learns , after he has lost his fear. His thinking and association capability causes the procedure to improve the final result.

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The next step will be to ask the child, after having matched many times series of four to hand to the therapist one kind. Like: "Please give me the four cards of 'safety belts'".(those cards are in a traffic sign card game) Again the child will go through his 12 series. (It is not advisable to mix card games; the best way is to leave topics separated.)
The child will read and reread with his eyes and will be able to hand the right cards, because it is enough to recognize the first syllable in "safety" or the first two letters "s,a". This encourages the child's tremendously, since he thinks that he improved his reading.
To make it more difficult and improve his level, the next step will be to sort two groups of four cards which are written similarly.
For example: water flowers and water birds.(in a nature card game) Since water is the same in both, if he guesses instead of reads, he will easily put them together. But since the second word is different, it is important to show the difference in the second word.
This can be made even harder when two words start with the same letters and end with different letters. Out of negligence they may be put together and not be read carefully. This will then be guessing and not reading. An example might be 'water-melon' and 'warm season'.
This kind of excercise may be done with cards from several packages of the card games used.
A next step will be to have the child give the therapist a certain card out of the four (from the same kind), when now he has to look down on the bottom of the card (small letters) where one will be printed in red to emphasize that that is the card he is holding. The therapist will now ask the child to give him the card which says 'donkey'. Even if the child looks at the picture to make sure, chances are that he will nevertheless read and reread the word 'donkey'. The more difficult the word and the less clear the picture is in connection with the word the more difficult the task can be made. For example: the headings will be "high mountains". The picture on all four cards will show high mountains, whereas each of them will give a different name, of course.
On the picture the difference will not be guessable. For example: One card will say "Mount Blanc" , the second "Mount Everest".
After having silently read the names and having handed over the cards, the child might learn the names by heart. This is however no problem, since the more cards the child will read or guess, the more training he will get and success will make the motivation to read stronger.
A further step will be to have the child repeat loudly the names of the cards after the therapist, first in a certain order and then randomly after having shuffled the series in a group of cards. This will be the last step before loud reading.
The card game may now start. The child is familiar with the contents and the group names as well as with the single cards in each package.The regular way of a card game is played. Each player, the therapist being one of them, starts with four cards. The rest remains on the table. The players have to match and order the cards in their hands. Then the therapist starts asking his first card and when given correctly, the child has to be praised , the words repeated, for training and reassurance and then the child's turn comes. He may play open cards, showing that he reads aloud , even assisted by his memory from the long training period and of course, he may be helped. Most of the time reading fluency will improve by each day of playing.
In a later stage (after 8-10 days of treatment) it is advisable to add

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another player to the game, who reads well and is fair in playing as well as understanding towards his friend's reading difficulty.
Many times the long previous training makes the child in treatment play better than his friend.

The card game was here described in detail but the same principle goes for any other game which demands reading ability as Monopoly, Life, Risk and many more.
In all these games the reading of cards with instructions, as well as all kinds of signs are essential. By playing the child trains his reading, first silent as if passive and later on when confident his fluency improves.

Another possibility of improving reading fluency is by showing video films in a foreign language when translation in the mother tongue appears at the bottom of each picture. The speed of the film can be controlled (slower). The picture can 'stand still' and doesn't run away. The child will understand the situation in the picture (of course the level of the slow has to be matched to his intelligence), so silent reading, in combination with low speed, avoiding threat, will enhance motivation and enable training of the child.
In all those activities the message is again and again to start a 'vicious circle' of success while avoiding failure.
It is important to emphasize that when the parents and teachers cooperate and encourage the therapeutic procedure the 'success loop' will start earlier and success itself will be continuous and ,what is most important, will spread out to other scolastic activities connected with reading.

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Spelling Errors - Where?

A Case Study.

The question I asked the twenty-three year old person (who was anxious to be helped in his spelling) was: "Tell me, Avi, where do you make the errors?".

"What do you mean ?",he said, and answered: "In my writing, of course."

"Since when?",I continued. "Since ever."' he replied.

"Would you know how many errors you make approximately on one written page?"

"No.",he said. "Probably an awful lot.I think in every single word."

"Let's count them.", I said, and asked him to show me a letter which he had written ten minutes ago. This letter was to his friend in the States.

When I had asked him to write this letter earlier, I had suggested he should write about his last summer vacation, he had spent diving and which enthusiastically he had described to me as a new but marvelous sport which had become his favorite hobby. I had emphasized he should not think about spelling, and write as fluently as he usually talked and to possibly concentrate on the letter's contents as if he was talking to his friend on a tape to be sent later.

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I now counted his spelling errors and found eighteen mistakes in ninety four words, which was one hand written page (approximately 20%).

We scored that together as "high".

Then I asked Avi to write an essay on the Kibbutz to a potential volunteer from Europe.We counted the errors again and the rate "per page" was sixteen mistakes to seventy four words (21%).Again we rated it as "high".

My instructions (again) had been not to concentrate on spelling but to explain about the Kibbutz as well as he could.

Next I asked Avi to summarize a short story which he performed extraordinarely well, namely he not only summarized but analized the social relationship between the characters in the story. Again my instructions had been to concentrate on the summary and forget about the spelling.Now the rate of errors we counted was twelve on seventy six words (16%).We decided together that he had done a little better than before.(Did he unconcsiously start to try harder? Or did the effect of training manifest itself?)

However, I didn't ask any questions and we continued.

My next assignment was to prepare a love poem, 48 words, for dictation.He studied for twenty minutes and declared to be ready. I dictated the poem: 1 error!! (Awareness?).

Further I dictated 42 words of the continuation of the same poem but now he hadn't prepared himself. 1 Error again!! Woh! What had happened?(Awareness,Shift of concentration,Motivation,Encouragement?).

In any case, we could now answer the question which I had asked one and a half hour earlier: "Spelling errors where?" The answer came from Avi himself:

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"I did concentrate on the letter to my friend, on the essay about the Kibbutz, on the summary of the short story and just let my spelling go. Didn't know spelling anyway; was told that I was disgraphic, dislectic, had focusing problems and severe psychological hang-ups. I went to a psychologist but after half a year of talking I realized that we never had touched my spelling problems. Then I went to a graphologist who diagnozed severe handicaps in his area and he sent me back to the psychologist, because I had been too old for his method. He further recommended a specialist for training eye focusing. Besides I remembered that once in the past a remedial teacher had recommended excersises for circular muscles only. Through the yellow pages I found a physiotherapist who was ready to take up on those excersises in other to improve my spelling. After six weeks I felt better and my voice was less hoarse. However no improvement in spelling was felt. My conclusion was: no cure possible.

But today in preparing myself for the dictation I decided to prove to myself that I could try at least to photograph or memorize the words of the poem. Then you found only 1 error, so on the rest of the poem I just believed it could happen again - and it did."

So my conclusion -our conclusion- was: Shift of concentration, constant awareness, confidence, encouragement - not "bullshit" about organic handicap in memory or visual perception, nor similar or different other diagnosa.

We had discussed the visual perception business before and in a scanning test I had proved to Avi that nothing was wrong with him. His perceptual constancy, figure-ground, organisation to stimuli, special

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relationship, visual memory etc. - all had been perfectly normal. Hence, he had gained confidence before we had started the writing assignments.

I answered the question I raised in the beginning where the spelling errors were to be found and we concluded that his errors were to be found in those texts which required concentration on contents and when the examiner had emphasized not to pay attention to the spelling itself.

Where were NO spelling errors? Where concentration was shifted to spelling and awareness, thinking, motivation and confidence integrated.

In the three and a half hours test situation almost no tension and strain manifested themselves since the general atmosphere was kept informal.

All this took place one Sunday morning. A happier and more confident person left my office after getting written instructions and detailed steps and examples on how to concentrate on contents as well as on spelling.

How did the treatment procedure go on? No immediate relevance to our primary question "Spelling errors - where?". (A following paper will describe "Awareness and hesitation exercises").

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